

**Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey**  
**State of Tennessee**  
**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:**

Contact: Adam Kleinheider

Phone: (615) 741-4524

*(Nashville) March 3, 2011* - Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey (R-Blountville) today spoke from the well of the state Senate following the reading of a resolution honoring his late friend, Jeff Byrd, the longtime president and general manager of Bristol Motor Speedway, with a week in his honor.

"Anybody who knew Jeff Byrd will never forget him," said Ramsey. "I have never seen anyone become a member of a community as quickly as Jeff Byrd did in Bristol."

"If Jeff Byrd had a fault, it was that he couldn't say no," Ramsey added. "He was always looking to help others and challenging those around him to do the same."

The resolution, Senate Joint Resolution 89, designates March 13-20 as Jeff Byrd Week in Tennessee. Rep. Jon Lundberg (R- Bristol) also spoke from the well in honor of Mr. Byrd.

"I am sorry for those of you who didn't know Jeff," said Lundberg. "He inspired not only me but everyone he touched."

Ramsey and Lundberg were joined in the well by Mr. Byrd's widow Claudia Byrd, his sister JoJo Davis and daughter Benton Caldwell.

"He wouldn't like the attention," said Mrs. Byrd said of her husband. "But he would be humbled and honored by this great recognition."

The resolution, once passed, will be framed and presented to the family prior to the annual spring race at the Bristol Motor Speedway. Longtime sponsor Food City has renamed the March 20 race the Jeff Byrd 500.

Following a career as a sportswriter at the Winston-Salem Journal, Byrd moved to the sports marketing department of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company eventually rising to the level of vice-president of business development before departing to become vice-president and general manager of the speedway.

In 2002, Byrd was promoted to president and general manager and under his direction the race track grew from 67,000 to 160,000 seats eventually becoming what some describe as a "Roman coliseum" of racing.

In addition to serving as an elder at the First Presbyterian in Kingsport, Byrd was active in numerous civic and charitable organizations. Byrd along with his wife started the Bristol Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities, a non-profit agency dedicated to aiding children in need in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

The full resolution honoring Byrd can be seen [here](#).

Video from today's session can be viewed at this link:

[http://tnsenate.com/blog/From\\_the\\_Floor/post/Lt\\_Gov\\_Ramsey\\_honors\\_late\\_racing\\_executive/](http://tnsenate.com/blog/From_the_Floor/post/Lt_Gov_Ramsey_honors_late_racing_executive/)